STATE ROUTE 509/SOUTH ACCESS ROAD PROJECT

WHITE PAPER

PREFERRED CORRIDOR RECOMMENDATION PROCESS SUMMARY

3 July 1996

Prepared for: State Route 509
South Access Road Steering Committee

Prepared by: Geoffrey L. Baillie
BERGER/ABAM Engineers Inc.

SR 509/SOUTH ACCESS ROAD PROJECT
WHITE PAPER
PREFERRED CORRIDOR RECOMMENDATION PROCESS SUMMARY
3 JULY 1996

PREPARED FOR: **State Route 509/South Access Road Steering Committee**

PREPARED BY: **Geoffrey L. Baillie**
BERGER/ABAM Engineers Inc.

I. INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND, AND PURPOSE

Purpose of the Project. The State Route (SR) 509/South Access Road project proposes to construct an extension of the existing SR 509 freeway from its current terminus near South 188th Street near Sea-Tac International Airport (STIA), to an interchange with Interstate 5 (I-5) at one of three possible locations, and to construct a new south access road to STIA. The purposes of the project are to implement a long-term solution to relieve congestion, increase mobility, and improve regional highway connections to serve existing and future transportation needs in southwest King County and to enhance access to STIA for south-oriented customers.

Purpose of this Report. The purpose of this report is to present and document the recommendation of the project Steering Committee for a preferred corridor based on the information presented in the Draft EIS, the supporting documentation, and the public and agency involvement process.

Background and History. The existing SR 509 corridor was adopted by the Washington State Transportation Commission in 1957 and authorized by the State legislature in 1959 to accommodate a limited access highway between Seattle and Tacoma. Part of its originally proposed function was to be an interregional freeway of up to six lanes paralleling I-5.

Design and construction proceeded south from Seattle to Burien in the 1960s and in the early 1970s, approximately 3.25 miles (5.25 kilometers) of right-of-way (ROW) was purchased from Burien to the City of Des Moines. In 1979, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) completed construction of the last freeway segment. Rising costs, limited availability of construction funds, and some opposition to extending the highway resulted in the WSDOT abandoning its plans to continue extension of the highway. The previously purchased right-of-way from the current freeway terminus to SR 516 is still owned by the WSDOT.

Subsequent developments included the passing of a resolution by the City of Des Moines in 1985 to permanently end SR 509 no further south than South 216th Street and turn back the unused ROW to WSDOT. In 1986, the Port of Seattle (Port) recommended construction of a new South Access Road to STIA. At that time, King County determined that this proposal was in conflict with the limited capacity of the County's road network. A study of a proposed new 28th/24th Avenue South arterial (approximate location from South 216th Street to South 188th Street) was initiated jointly by the Port and the County and, later, taken over by the newly incorporated City of SeaTac.

During 1987 and 1988, King County, with WSDOT participation, developed the Sea-Tac Area Update and issued a report recommending extension of the SR 509 freeway to I-5 in the vicinity of South 210th/211th Street. These events and several others resulted in the establishment of a joint public/private South Access Advisory Committee being formed in 1989 for the purpose of conducting additional studies in the area. A SR 509/South Access Road Corridor Report was undertaken as a joint, cooperative effort by the following agencies: the cities of SeaTac and Des Moines, WSDOT, the Port, King County (now the King County Department of Public Works) and METRO (now the King County Department of Metropolitan Services).

A memorandum of agreement was signed by the participating agencies (cities of SeaTac and Des Moines, King County, METRO, the Port of Seattle, and WSDOT) establishing an Executive Committee and, in turn, a technical Steering Committee. Elected and appointed officials make up the Executive Committee, the decision-making body for the project, and technical staff of the participating agencies make up the Steering Committee. A project manager and EIS consultant were hired to assist the committees in the work.

Phase 1 of the project consisted of developing a large number of potential alternatives and screening the large number, in a two-step process, to those that were deemed reasonable for purposes of the environmental documentation (EIS) process. This process, which involved considerable public and agency input, was completed and culminated in Phase 2 of the project, the issuance of a draft EIS (programmatic) in December 1995. This programmatic Draft EIS was prepared for purposes of selecting a corridor. After selection of the preferred corridor, a project specific EIS (called a Tier 2 EIS) is slated to be prepared to assist in the selection of the preferred alignment. Public comment on the Draft EIS was open until March 1996.

Preferred Corridor Selection Process. The overall selection process involves the following steps: 1) a review of the Draft EIS and public and agency comments by the project Executive and Steering Committees; 2) an initial recommendation for the preferred corridor by the Steering Committee; 3) a review of the Steering Committee recommendation and any additional information required by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); 4) an initial Executive Committee recommendation; 5) ratification, as necessary by the participating agencies councils/commissions; and 6) the final Executive Committee decision on the preferred corridor. This is then subject to approval/acceptance by the FHWA prior to issuance of the Final EIS (Tier 1). In addition to the decision of the preferred corridor, the parties are also responsible for determining changes in the selection process.

The remainder of this paper documents Step 2 of the above process, the initial recommendation of the project Steering Committee for a preferred corridor.

II. RECOMMENDATION MAKING PROCESS AND RESULTS

The project Steering Committee met on 13 March 1996 to review the input received from the public and agencies during the public comment period on the DEIS, which ended on 11 March 1996. Copies of all comments received, including the transcript of the public hearing, were distributed to each Steering Committee member with instructions to review the record and the Draft EIS thoroughly. In addition, a proposed recommendation making process was discussed and approved. The committee met again on 27 March 1996 to discuss and approve the results of the process.

The process the Steering Committee decided to use was one in which each voting Steering Committee member ranked and weighted the relative merit of each alternative in terms of its propensity to meet the goals and objectives established and adopted for the project. The project goals and objectives are as follows.

1. Support local and regional comprehensive planning and development.
2. Improve access to the airport for south-oriented customers.
3. Relieve local congestion.
4. Improve regional mobility and safety.
5. Be compatible with connections to high-capacity transit.
6. Develop broad public and political support for the selected alternative.
7. Be compatible with environmental features.
8. Provide cost-effective alternatives/solutions.

In order to determine the alternative corridor that, overall, best met these goals and objectives, each Steering Committee member individually determined, in their own judgment, a relative weight for each objective using a whole number from one to five, with five being the highest ranking in terms of importance. Each member also ranked the alternatives as to their propensity to accomplish these goals and objectives, using a scale of one to ten, with ten being the highest propensity to accomplish the stated goal/objective.

The summary of evaluations is shown below. The summary of results was tallied based on each rater's score being equal in importance in determining the outcome. As can be seen, the Committee was unanimous in its selection of Alternative 2 as the preferred corridor and virtually unanimous in its selection of Alternative 4 and Alternative 3 as second and third choices, respectively. Alternative 1 was unanimously chosen as least preferred.

III. SUMMARY OF EVALUATIONS

Rater	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt4
City of SeaTac	115	273	209	232
City of Des Moines	112	228	155	210
Port of Seattle	78	205	109	160
King County/METRO	44	272	256	222
WSDOT	74	222	121	164
Totals	**423**	**1200**	**858**	**988**

The Steering Committee met with the Executive Committee on 9 April 1996 to present their recommendations for a preferred corridor.

e:\dw96\glb0703